

FLU

Arizona Department of Corrections
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program
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What is the flu?

The flu is **not** a cold!

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the respiratory tract (air passages) caused by a virus. The flu virus causes more severe symptoms than other respiratory viruses such as the common cold virus. The flu is easily spread by virus-infected droplets coughed or sneezed into the air. Especially at risk are areas where many people gather together in close quarters. *Outbreaks* (sudden appearance of the disease) tend to occur in the winter and spread rapidly. A pandemic is a widespread, global outbreak of flu.

What causes the flu?

There are three main types of flu viruses, called A, B, and C. When infected with a particular strain of the virus, your body attacks the intruder and even develops immunity to that strain. Viruses occasionally alter to produce new strains that may be able to overcome immunity built up from a previous attack.

How is the flu treated?

In all but the mildest cases, a person with the flu should rest in bed. Once the fever has broken, the patient can get out of bed but return to normal activities slowly. To lower a fever, take acetaminophen or ibuprofen. **Drink plenty of fluids and temporarily quit smoking** as this will aid your body in clearing out the congestion. Throat lozenges (sore throat), decongestants (stuffy head/ sinus pressure), and antihistamines (runny nose) are effective in temporarily relieving discomfort associated

with the flu. Do not take more than the recommended doses of these medications, as they could cause harmful effects in greater amounts.

How can I prevent the flu?

The oldest and simplest way to avoid infection is frequent hand washing. Avoid sharing silverware, glasses, and cigarettes with others, especially during the flu season. Cover your cough. Avoid close contact with those who are infected. Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or face if you think you might have contacted the virus.

Symptoms

- Flu tends to start suddenly and rapidly progresses through its stages.
- Symptoms are chills, fever, headache, body aches, loss of appetite, and fatigue.
- These are usually followed by a cough (often with chest discomfort), sore throat, and runny nose.
- After 3-4 days, fever and other symptoms start to subside.
- After 5 days the infection has usually run its course.
- Infection with the flu virus may lead to other illnesses such as ear, sinus, and bronchial infections.

